Subject: Chat with Clark Robinson
From: Clark Robinson <robinsonchicago@gmail.com>
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me: okay, it's up
me: at the original link
me: meanwhile
me: True/Slant was acquired by Forbes the other day
me: Allison Kilkenny, who's one of our people, just announced she'll be leaving
Clark: I already saw version two, it was much smoother, very nice
me: because she'd rather not work for Forbes
me: they'll be axing a number of the writers soon
me: not sure if I'll be retained or not
Clark: I have no idea if Forbes is smart enough to keep smart lively voices or are just conventionalize it
me: if not, I'll probably end up staying in Texas a little longer than scheduled as they provide about half my income
Clark: just going to conventionalize it I meant
me: gotcha
me: I might even move down to Mexico for a while, likely to Zihuatanejo, where I've lived previously
me: as that would allow me to continue working as I see fit without having to do any copywriting nonsense or otherwise hustling for livable income
Clark: True Slant did demonstrate that a group of collected bloggers can be fascinating to readers, and it relieves everybody of the imperative to post every single day, which seems to lead to the kind of degeneration of the institution, as you have described
me: certainly, they're relatively virtuous as an outlet
me: however
me: I'm disappointed with the extent to which they put a lot of nonsense on the front page
me: style/celebrity crap
Clark: yeah, i noticed that, i dont even know who many of those people are
me: they certainly have done well, increasing monthly unique visitors to over a million as of a few months ago and steadily growing since
me: yeah, they seem to have been just collecting bloggers
me: one of them, Caitlin Kelley, is pretty indicative of the problem
me: I happen to have had a run-in with her years back on mediabistro, a media forum
me: she gets almost no hits
me: writes tons of articles
Clark: now and then she would do something really good ,then a series about dieting, zzzzz
me: and concentrates on
me: yeah, exactly

Clark: can you blog from Mexico, do they have reliable internet infrastructure?
me: a not particularly talented writer who's having to compete with the new breed
me: absolutely, I lived in the same place for a little while in 2003, there are internet cafes and all that
Clark: you speak spanish?
me: yes, although not as much as I used to but I pick it up quickly each time I go back; my mom's family is from the border, my grandma lived in Mexico for a while, I've spent almost a year there in total
me: altogether, I believe I can get this next book finished more quickly if I get out of New York for a while and particularly if I get back to Tejas/Mexico
me: I'll be heading down to the border late next month with an old girlfriend of mine and will check out potential options along the way
Clark: how far is tejas from texas border
Clark: contiguous?
me: Tejas = Texas
me: I'm trying to locate a town that is sufficiently locked into the globe to have reliable internet cafes while being sufficiently rustic that I can live extraordinarily cheap
me: I could potentially live on $500 a month or even less down there
me: which would free me from financial distractions entirely and allow me to concentrate on
me: p
me: pm; would continue doing skeptical inquirer column at $300/month as well as articles for NY Press and a few other venues, and could thus spend most of my time developing PM further
me: there are a number of new concepts we could implement that would turn
Clark: actually you could see how internet use differs in the impoverished rural culture which would give some insight as to how to prepare educational materials for villages , world wide
me: pm into something far superior, structurally, to what it is now, I simply need the time to think about it
me: yes, certainly; I have some particular insight into that already by virtue of having lived in Africa and Mexico in the past, and also we'll ask about that from others
Clark: if you can be happy in mexico for a while, its the same internet as here, or do the IPs behave differently there?
me: just spoke to Frank Cohn, who runs that charity which takes Brooklyn teenagers over to Africa, he'll know more than I about that, and at any rate we'll definitely make that educational material available on the web
me: same internet, essentially
me: so there wouldn't be any problems in that regard
Clark: need to find translators, yes?
me: that won't be difficult at all, I can arrange for that
Clark: but you have the entire planet to choose them from
me: indeed. And at any rate, I might be more productive by virtue of accessing the internet only twice a day and working offline otherwise, as I've had problems with what's now called

information addiction
me: which I don't regret insomuch as that this has led me along certain lines of inquiry that have been absolutely essential to PM and some of my other work
me: but even the more mundane things like checking out favorite blogs or looking up some scientist's bio on wikipedia can be distracting
me: so, all in all, Mexico will allow me to more quickly finish the book, which I'll almost certainly be taking to a larger publisher this time
me: and which itself could be helpful in prompting others to think more about what we're thinking about
Clark: i was back and forth a couple of messages with Matt from Ann Arbor, you get the feeling that there are a bunch of thoughtful people who are ready to come out of the cocoon of politeness and withdrawal that has been breached in the last few years by the virulence of the religous right
Clark: it used to be you would just sort of look the other way when you encountered ranting ignorant religous folks, for instance, i once, just because a neighbor asked me, took my big diesel tractor and carved a parking lot out of a hillside for the Pillar of Truth Chuch of Barger's Springs (WV), but I dont think I could do stuff like that now
me: well, I've been in a number of unusual positions by virtue of having grown up in Dallas as an atheist since 12 or 13 and gone to religious private schools as soon as my mom could afford them, and also having once worked as a furniture mover for a Pentacostal church that used its tax-exempt status to make money for the preacher
me: I don't like to hurt anyone's feelings unless they are individually mean-spirited
me: but their anti-gay sentiment is pretty much a litmus test as to whether I consider someone virtuous
me: my best friend growing up was the son of Will Murchison, a columnist for the Dallas Morning NEws and leader of "The Episcopal Synod," a faction of that sect which wanted to ensure anti-gay policies as the sect liberalized
me: of course my friend ended up being gay
me: at around 14 or so
me: after having debated me countless times on gay rights and whether they should all be put on an island and whatnot
Clark: cell phones work pretty good in mexico?
Clark: also, I have set up a blogspot blog to replace the google docs, I think it will work better http://workshoppm.blogspot.com/
me: American cell phones don't work down there, one must get a new one, which is no problem at all
Clark: I am still adjusting it, and will get feedback from scott and tim ellis and some others
me: great, that's a fine idea
me: anyway, I was a copywriter first time I moved down there, did my work on my laptop on the beach and then went in to internet cafe once a day to send in my stuff and check e-mail and whatnot
Clark: oops you probably can't see it, its authors only at the moment

me: so I've already done a sort of test run as to the viability of all that
me: the room I rented for $300 a month was furnished, free laundry service/clean sheets, 50 yards from the bay on the pacific, nearby a restaurant with $5 steaks accompanied by salad and baked potato
me: extrapolating from all of that, I could live in a somewhat less luxurious setting for perhaps just $400 a month
me: easily paid for with just my monthly column and one other article
me: I could essentially run PM full-time even accounting for time on my book
me: by the time I move down, will ensure that we have plenty of other people to help run day-to-day operations so that, if you'd be willing, you can be in command of everything, delegate to the extent that you see fit, and be free to think about big-picture operations while others handle the details, although of course you can dip into specifics to whatever extent you feel is necessary
Clark: i think you may find a core of writers to contribute to the PM brand, excuse the term, for whom payment is not primary
me: although, despite me being partly incommunicado for the duration of Mexico stay, I should actually be able to contribute quite a bit more and otherwise do a better job of staying on top of these things than I can now
me: yes, we definitely need to think more about finding additional bloggers
me: right now, Michael Hastings is the most enthusiastic of our media folks, but he's in Afghanistan
me: of course, several of our media folks simply haven't been given anything to do yet
Clark: his book was great, is there a movie deal pending? (hastings)
me: but I haven't been able to get Kilkenny, for instance, to respond to queries regarding Africa sub-project; of course she's very busy
me: but anyway I've been meaning to get in touch with, for instance, a number of science and skeptic bloggers whom I believe will be more likely to cross-over and serve with us on the governing network side of things
me: I don't believe there's a movie deal pending, last spoke to him a month ago, he is however about to start on another novel, this time dealing with the failures of the media
me: he also provided a blurb for my upcoming book
me: http://www.amazon.com/Hot-Fat-Clouded-Failures-Chattering/dp/0982139144
me: can be seen there, scroll down a bit
Clark: nice statement -- was the VF Karuthamer article a chapter or part of one, I liked that
me: that was an excerpt of the Krauthammer chapter; actually, there are a couple of Kraut articles in addition to that which aren't in the book
me: in fact.
me: that reminds me, was going to make fun of Kraut's latest but forgot
me: what I really need
me: Is some sort of organizational utility
me: I had one for my last laptop's linux OS that was like a post-it note program
me: and when you titled one note something

me: and used the same term in another note
me: it would link to it automatically
me: which was incredibly useful in coordinating various concepts related to PM and underlying concepts
Clark: MS outlook did that for me at work, i wonder if google mail has a feature like that
me: I downloaded like five different stickie programs for Windows yesterday and none of them did that particular thing
me: and then one of them which I wrote my to-do list on, that note just disappeared for no good reason
me: I looked on Google's list of apps, didn't see anything similar
me: that's really all I need for my life to be complete, just one fucking program that will do automatic hyperlinking from doc to doc
me: I can't keep my Google Docs organized at all
Clark: Theres a task thing on the left menu, looks like a reminder program
me: Hmm, I'll keep looking
me: I need something for my desktop for when I'm travelling or in Mexico
me: something without net requirements
Clark: i dont have enough yet for that to be a problem, but i can see how you would, youre probably up in three figures of them
me: what's surprising is that this problem hasn't been addressed to a further extent at this point
me: I'm going to design such a program myself, I suppose, something that will serve as a sort of extension of one's ability to cross-conceptualize
Clark: ms outlook did that stuff, Booz Allen would send me meeting notices with so many spread sheets and powerpoints attached that my email would freeze
Clark: but i think thats apples and oranges different from what your saying
me: I learned a bit of coding two years ago and made a rudimentary game, was going to learn Ruby while I'm in East Texas and make a sort of simple simulation of an ecosystem using goblins with random characteristics taken from a pool of those I design, and which will then breed in a virtual environment which the player may meanwhile explore
me: adding other species as I develop the game further
me: that's just a hobby, and then afterwards, having thereby learned a bit more about programming, I'll create something for writers or philosophers or whatever
me: then package it with our project software
me: probably will have our hacker participants improve it first
me: or perhaps just give them the specs
Clark: maybe thats one group we should be targeting the true slant press release to: young (under 40) writers with interesting voices, encountered on the net, but demonstrably hungry, and willing to be in the lower circles
me: absolutely
me: oops, gotta bolt, talk to you soon
Clark: OK, have a good night